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Defectors As Spies

Intelligence operations always have projected an image of cavalier excitement, of dark-garbed figures darting through alleys, and of embassy code clerks defecting to the enemy.

Much of intelligence work of course, is far removed from the excitement of fiction, but there is a resemblance in the area of agents and provocateurs. Allen Dulles, former chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, points in his book, "The Craft of Intelligence," to the important role played in the modern world by one special type of agent—the defector.

Defectors are not always the disenchanted moralist who is convinced he can better help save the world by joining the other side. In fact, they seldom are. Mostly, they are persons who have been compromised at home or are offered irresistible attractions by the opposing camp.

There is a special class, even among defectors, which has become well-publicized in the years of the Soviet-United States cold war, a period incidentally, which has seen the intelligence agent grow from an occasional amateur to armies of thousands of well-trained professionals.

This class is the double agent, and more recently the triple agent. The double agent is the man who spies for one side while ostensibly working for the other. The triple agent, however, manages to invent an intelligence relay system which is so intricate, neither side is positively sure where his loyalties may be.

Mr. Dulles feels the age of the double agent may be coming to a close, at least as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, for two reasons. The science of detection has progressed sufficiently to expose most double agents within a short time—and to the embarrassment of the USSR, a number of its double agents actually did defect to the West.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and others have estimated as many as 80 per cent of the diplomatic corps and "cultural exchange" persons from the Soviet Union also have an intelligence assignment while in the United States. Apparently the Kremlin takes its espionage system far more seriously than does the U.S.